DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 207 920 SO 013 652

AUTHOR McTeer, J. Hugh; Murray, Barry W.
TITLE Level of Economic Knowledge of Certain Groups of Teachers.
PUB DATE 80
NOTE 10p.

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Business Education; *Economics; Educational Research; Elementary School Teachers; Elementary Secondary Education; Females; *Knowledge Level; Males; Secondary School Teachers; Sex Differences; *Social Studies; Teacher Qualifications; *Teachers

ABSTRACT

This study investigated the knowledge that teachers have of economics. A major purpose was to determine if certain groups of teachers (business education, social studies, elementary, male and female) were competent to teach economics courses. Data for the study were collected from the records of 11 economics workshops conducted from 1966 to 1977 at Georgia State University, Atlanta, Georgia. The population was composed of 204 experienced teachers--105 social studies teachers, 44 business education teachers, and 55 elementary teachers. Teachers were selected for participation in the workshops on the basis of their interest in and involvement with economics subject matter. During the first week of each workshop, Form A of the Test of Economic Understanding was administered to measure the level of economic understanding of the teachers. Findings include the following: (1) most teachers do not have enough economic knowledge to effectively teach economics; (2) there is little difference in knowledge of economics between inservice business education teachers and inservice social studies teachers; (3) elementary teachers scored lower on the test than did either of the other groups; and (4) male social studies and business education teachers had more knowledge of economics than females. (Author/RM)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED207920

OCT 26 1981

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION
CENTER (ERIC)

X This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official NIE position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

J. Hugh McTeer

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

LEVEL OF ECONOMIC KNOWLEDGE OF CERTAIN GROUPS OF TEACHERS

by

J. Hugh McTeer
Professor of Education
West Georgia College

Barry W. Murray
Teacher, R. L. Osborne Senior High School
Marietta, Georgia

1980

SP 015 652

LEVEL OF ECONOMIC KNOWLEDGE OF
CERTAIN GROUPS OF TEACHERS

The 1970's has been a decade in which many states have implemented mandatory study in economics for students who plan to graduate from high school. This has resulted in secondary schools offering many more sections of economics courses. As a result of these increases in the economics curricular offerings, secondary school administrators and teachers have faced two major problems: (1) finding faculty members who have an adequate knowledge of economic principles and concepts to teach these courses, and (2) determing which department in the school's organization would offer the economics courses. The two departments where the economic courses have been most frequently offered have been social studies and business education.

Teachers who have an inadequate knowledge about economics cannot be expected to adequately teach the economics courses. A number of studies have examined this problem. Alexander and Prehn (1971), Bach and Saunders (1965), and The National Task Force of the Committee for Economic Development (1961) found that few teachers have taken enough economics in college to prepare them to teach effectively in this area. Saunders (1966) considered adequate economic knowledge for a secondary teacher to effectively teach economics to include a three-quarter sequence course of basic economics plus some added advanced courses. Bach and Saunders (1965) reported that the mean scores of tests that reflected economic understanding of social studies teachers showed that these teachers had a poor understanding of basic economic concepts. Other writers have theorized that elementary and secondary teachers were unprepared to teach economics.

When economics courses are taught in the secondary school, frequently the problem arises as to which teachers are more competent to teach these courses--business education teachers or social studies teachers. Some educators have reasoned that social studies teachers should teach these courses. The National Task Force of the Committee for Economic Development (1961) took this position because of the inter-disciplinary nature of the social studies. History, government, geography, and other social studies areas, in their opinion, could not be divorced from economic activities and economic principles. Yet business education professionals believe that business education teachers should be the ones to teach economic courses. Garman (1970) reported that some data generally supported the position for business education teachers teaching economics. These data showed business education teachers had taken more courses in economics than had social studies teachers.

No studies could be found which compared in-service business education teachers and in-service social studies teachers as to their knowledge of economic concepts and principles. Ganser (1969) administered the Test of Economic Understanding to preservice business education majors and social studies majors at Wisconsin State University--Whitewater. The findings of this study indicated that there were no significant differences in the level of economics understanding between these two groups.

This study was conducted to gain further knowledge as to the level of economic knowledge teachers have and also to determine if there existed differences in this knowledge between certain groups

of teachers (business education, social studies, elementary, male, and female). Data for this study were collected from the records of eleven economics education workshops conducted from 1966 to 1977 at Georgia State University, Atlanta, Georgia. This population was composed of 204 experienced teachers who taught in or near the metropolitan Atlanta area. Three of these teachers taught in private schools while 201 of them taught in public schools. The population consisted of 105 social studies teachers, 44 business education teachers, and 55 elementary teachers. Of these, 56 were males and 145 were females. Because there were only two male elementary teachers, only business education and social studies teachers were used for the male-female comparision.

Teachers were selected for participation in the workshops on the basis of their interest in and involvement with economics subject matter. For each applicant there was a requirement of a letter of recommendation from the teacher's immediate supervisor indicating the teacher's likely involvement with and interest in economics education leadership.

During the first week of each workshop, Form A of the Test of Economic Understanding was administered to measure the level of economic understanding of the teachers. This test, developed by the Joint Council of Economic Education, is a nationally standarized achievement test designed to measure economic knowledge of high school graduates. Questions in the test covered the basic areas of micro- and macro-economics, international economics, comparative

systems, supply and demand, etc. A few questions required analysis of major policy issues such as fiscal and monetary policy. Also, some questions required reading and interpreting graphs and charts. The test included fifty items.

Table I gives the mean scores of the teachers, according to various categories, who took this test.

Table I

Mean Scores on the Test of Economic Understanding

Group	Number	Mean
Business Education	44	32.41
Social Studies	105	32.49
Elementary	55	27.40
*Males	54	35.30
*Females	95	30.85

*The groups (Males and Females) include only social studies and business education teachers.

The test was normed on 12th grade high school students from high schools located throughout the United States. The mean score for those students who had at least a twelve-week study of economics was 30.48 with a standard deviation of 8.29. Except for male social studies and business education teachers, no group of teachers had a mean score that was much higher than the mean score of 12th grade high school students who had some study in economics. Female social studies teachers and female business education teachers had a mean score that was very little different from these high school seniors. Elementary teachers scored below the high school senior norms.

Since all of these teachers expressed an interest in economics and were recommended by their supervisors as being teachers who had

potential for economic education leadership, they probably had more knowledge of economic concepts and principles than does the average teacher of their particular discipline area. This reinforces the ideas expressed by earlier writers that most teachers do not have sufficient economic knowledge to effectively teach economics.

In order to find if there were differences between the groups in reference to their economic knowledge as defined by the mean scores on the test, t-tests for difference between the mean scores of the groups were computed. Table II gives the results of these t-tests.

Table II

t-Test Analysis of Mean Scores of Various Groups

Groups	Number	Mean	Standard Deviation	t
Business Education	44	32.41	7.59	
Social Studies	105	32.49	7.69	.68
Social Studies	105	32.49	7.69	
Elementary	55	27.40	6.85	4.28*
Business Education	44	32.41	7.59	
Elementary	55	27.40	6.85	3.42*
**Male	54	35.30	7.00	
**Female	95	30.85	7.54	3.65*

*Significant at the .01 level.
**The groups (Male and Female) include only social studies and business education teachers.

From Table II it may be seen that the mean scores of business education teachers and social studies teachers were almost the same and there was no significant differences between these two groups. Significant difference, at the .01 level, were found between elementary teachers and social studies teachers and elementary teachers and business education teachers.

Elementary teachers scored lower on this test for economic knowledge than did either of the other groups. The male teachers scored significantly higher than did the female teachers.

Although the study was confined to teachers from the metropolitan area of Atlanta, Georgia, these teachers are probably somewhat similar to teachers in other sections of the United States. If results of this study can be generalized to teachers in other sections of the country, it would support the statements that have been made that most teachers do not have enough economic knowledge to effectively teach economics. Especially this is true for all groups except male social studies teachers and male business education teachers. It reinforces the need, that many have expressed, for more study in economics on the undergraduate and post-graduate level for those teachers who will teach economics.

The study showed that there was little difference in knowledge of economics between in-service business education teachers and in-service social studies teachers. If this study is generalized to other areas of the United States, when decisions are made as to whether the teaching of economics courses is done by the business education department or the social studies department, the decisions should be made on some other ground than on which group has the greatest knowledge of economics.

The study found a difference in relationship to sex with reference to social studies and business education teachers. Males had more knowledge of economics than did females. This may be due in part

to the fact that our culture has encouraged greater male interest in and acquaintance with economic concepts. This may change as females participate more in the business world activities and other societal areas that demand knowledge of economics.

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Alexander, A. and Prehn, E. "Economic Education in an Age of Great Expectation and Instant Solutions," Social Education, 1971, 35, pp. 262-276.

Bach, G. L. and Saunders, P. "Economic Education: Aspirations and Achievements," The American Economic Review, 1965, 55, pp. 329-346.

Bach, G. L. and Saunders, P. "Lasting Effects of Economics Courses at Different Institutions," The American Economic Review, 1966, 56, pp. 505-511.

Barfuss, G. and Bell, R.D. "Deficiencies in Economics Understanding," Balance Sheet, 1975, 57, pp. 52-55.

Becker, W. E. and Reinke, R. W. "What Economics Should the Educator Know?" The Social Studies, 1975, 66, pp. 195-204.

Committee for Economic Development, Economic Education in the Schools: A Report of the National Task Force on Economic Education, New York: Author, 1961.

Committee for Economic Development, Economic Literacy for Americans: A Program for Schools and for Citizens. New York: Author, 1962.

Ganser, C. J. An Evaluation of the Understanding of Economic Concepts by Business Education and Social Studies Undergraduate Teaching Majors at Wisconsin State University -- Whitewater. (Doctoral Dissertation, University of Wisconsin, 1969.)

Garman, E. T. "Economic Literacy of Prospective Business Education Teachers," Business Education Forum, 1970, 24, p. 35.

McKenzie, R. B. "An Exploratory Study of the Economic Understanding of Elementary School Teachers," The Journal of Economic Education, 1971, 3, pp. 26-31.

Saunders, P. "Preparing Future Teachers for Economic Competence: Content Appraisal," Social Education, 1966, 30, pp. 247-250.